

Good afternoon and thank you for attending this, my second State of the City Address.

First, I would like to thank the management of Parmatown mall and the Parma area Chamber of Commerce for hosting this event. I appreciate all the hard work that has gone into making this day possible. Chamber President Bob Verdile and Executive Director Pat Pell, thanks. Frank Lanterman and Liz Glassell from Parmatown, I really appreciate your work and for providing this venue.

I am pleased to see so many residents, members of the clergy, the business community and representatives from our great city school district. Thank you all so much for being here today.

I would like to thank the members of Parma City Council and other elected officials for taking time out to join us here today. I couldn't ask for a more professional, responsive, and vigilant city council to work with. Council President Chuck Germana. Many thanks for your ongoing leadership. I'd also like to acknowledge recently appointed Clerk of Council Tom Mastroianni.

Outside of City Hall I have formed valuable partnerships and friendships. One example of such a relationship is U.S. Marshal Pete Elliott who has brought the gang resistance and education training program – or “G.R.E.A.T.”- to the Parma City School system. While Parma does not have a gang problem this program teaches self esteem and mediation skills. Marshal Elliott, glad that you could be here today and thanks for your contribution. With the help of Marshall Elliott, we expect to obtain a federal grant to expand this program significantly in the next school year.

Before I begin my report, I'd like to take a moment to recognize my Cabinet members who have been so loyal and professional in carrying out their assigned tasks during these first two years of my administration.

It is my intent today to provide you with a report card for the city for 2005, and to let you know what my administration has planned for this year.

It has been said that, “vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. But vision with action can change the world.”

Keeping a city the size of Parma running creates a number of unique challenges, and 2005 was no exception. Northeast Ohio experienced one of the snowiest winters on record. We watched gasoline prices soar to unbelievable levels. Health care costs continued to rise. I am proud to say that despite the unexpected, and through sound financial management, we came in under the projected budget for the year.

The City of Parma Department of Public Service, under the capable leadership of Director Brian Higgins and Public Works Coordinator Jack Sparks, was able to keep up with the snow removal. It is important to note that our plows will use up to 2,000 gallons of fuel during a 24-hour snowstorm. We also purchased over 17,000 tons of road salt. In

the warmer months, the department used over 11,000 tons of asphalt and ten streets were completely repaved. We responded to almost 5,000 storm and sanitary sewer calls, and these figures are not unusual. We look for an aggressive street repaving program this year.

The Department of Public Safety, led by Safety Director Greg Baeppler, Police Chief Dan Hoffman and Fire Chief John French, once again allowed Parma to be listed as one of America's safest cities. 2005 was a typically busy year for Parma's safety forces. Our Police Department responded to over 36,000 requests for assistance - an astonishing average of almost 100 calls per day. The Department is also participating in a county task force dealing with internet crimes against children.

Our firefighters responded to over 12,000 emergency calls. Over 80 percent of those were requests for medical assistance.

A major component of the Parma Police Department is its Auxiliary Unit - a dedicated group of volunteers who turned out for more than 12,000 hours of service in 2005. Day-in-and-day-out, they capably serve the Department and our town. And their efforts are greatly appreciated.

Julie Kocik is Parma's animal control officer. During 2005 Julie handled 1,100 animal complaints. She has also built upon the partnership between the city and the volunteers of Parma's animal shelter, and significant improvements have been made to the shelter's building on State Road.

We hope that 2006 will be a year of growth for our police and fire departments. We are close to being severely understaffed within the police department and hope to hire some new police officers. Monies from a federal grant will be used to place mobile data terminals in some police cruisers, allowing officers speedy access to criminal database information. This will both improve our officers' safety and enhance their effectiveness.

We are excited that construction will begin on two replacement fire stations this spring. Both stations will be state-of-the-art training and operations facilities, and are long overdue. A special thank-you goes out to Assistant Fire Chief Dennis Ryan for his unwavering commitment to this project.

This year will also see the beginning of a long-awaited \$4.9 million traffic signalization project that will dramatically improve traffic flow on two of our busiest streets---Ridge and State Roads.

Parma's Building and Engineering Department, under the direction of City Engineer and Commissioner Paul Deichmann, has worked tirelessly to ensure the integrity of our city's housing stock. Property maintenance inspections are now routine and will guarantee that our neighborhoods continue to be the attractive well-maintained areas they have always been.

Parma continues to attract new businesses and 2005 was no exception. Dick's Sporting Goods opened right here at the mall. Ohio Soap Company relocated to Parma last year bringing 21 new jobs with an additional 24 positions projected over the next three years. Graftech International announced that it would move its corporate headquarters from the state of Delaware to Parma, creating 25 good paying new jobs and an additional 30 planned for the future. The Sheet Metal Workers Union is bringing 30 new jobs to Parma in a training facility the union is building in the Parma industrial park. Regarding the industrial park, our developer has recently purchased additional acreage on Snow Road to expand this growing commercial area.

Parma Community General Hospital, a 2005 Better Business Bureau Torch Award winner for integrity, continues to grow as Cuyahoga County's only independent not-for-profit hospital and I congratulate them.

New home construction is happening in our city. I am delighted that for the first time in 20 years new housing is being erected on the north side of town. 17 new homes are being built on the site of the old police station on West 54th Street. The City can be proud of another housing development constructing 30 new homes in Walter's Reserve. Our third cluster-home development of houses that will sell starting in the low \$200,000 range is unfolding off Sprague Road.

All of this growth means additional activity for our Building and Engineering Department, and I am told that the pace there is reminiscent of the growth spurt in the 1960's, but with significantly less personnel. We are grateful for the computerization of many of our processes, and in 2006 will be researching even more ways of streamlining our business with additional electronic applications.

2005 was another banner year for Parma's Parks and Recreation Department. Director Mickey Vittardi is devoted to Parma's youth and our Recreational Sports Program remains strong. We were able to keep all existing pools open and our ice rink functioning. We re-named a city park to honor former mayor John Petruska, and we gratefully accepted a very generous donation from former Mayor James Day that will be used to build a new pavilion at the park that bears his name. Construction will begin this year. Last year, Mickey's Department computerized the registration of sports programs for better efficiency. They also partnered with the Parma City Schools, specifically Parkview Elementary, and developed a section of Hollywood Park into a learning garden.

Just as important as the young people in Parma are our senior citizens. Parma's Senior Center, under the passionate leadership of Director Joann Mason, continues to serve as a meeting place for our elderly residents. The Center's Meals-On-Wheels delivered 7,500 hot meals to home-bound seniors, and served an additional 20,000 meals at the Center itself. The staff provides referrals to social services, including the Home Energy Assistance Program, and the Center once again coordinated a flu shot clinic this past fall. Always ready to lend a hand, Director Mason and her employees stepped up and worked with my office when we put together a Hurricane Katrina donation drive. Within just a few days Parma residents donated three semi-trucks worth of clothing and supplies, using

the Senior Center as the drop-off point. City employees and volunteers worked tirelessly to sort and pack all the donations, and the town of Marksville, Louisiana was grateful for our efforts. Thank you Parma for your generosity.

In 2006 Joann hopes to obtain additional grant funds to implement even more activities at the center. Later this year we are hoping to add some late afternoon and evening programs.

Parma's Department of Community Development, headed by Director Erik Tollerup, is charged with economic development as well as community assistance programs for our residents. Some of the business mentioned earlier utilized relocation tools available through this Department. We also assist our citizens through a number of programs to include first time homebuyers, home repair loans, and sidewalk repairs. The State of Ohio has approved the City's plan to encourage redevelopment of the Pearl/Ridge Triangle by offering tax abatement for residential and commercial development. Our storefront renovation program has helped small business owners improve the appearance of their property. Several more projects are planned this spring and summer.

The Purchasing and Personnel Department continued to save money for the City of Parma through instituted policies and procedures that realized approximately \$212,000 in savings to the taxpayers. The Department administers all of the employee benefit plans, and worked on expanding the Drug Free Workplace and Transitional Work Programs. Thanks to the leadership of Director Elayne Siegfried and her hardworking staff, the City of Parma has seen increased efficiency with fewer resources.

The Parma Public Housing Agency, under the superb Direction of Lev Kulchytsky, has been recognized by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as a model of efficiency and accountability. We are proud of the tight organization Lev has formed, and look forward to continued success from his group.

During 2005, Parma's Communications and Community Relations Director, Powell Caesar, continued to keep our citizens informed, worked with the media, and built important relationships beyond our municipal borders.

Volunteering and being involved in the community is vitally important to the success of that community. That is why my office started a Citizen of the Month Award for deserving residents, and we encourage nominations. Submittal forms are available on the city website or in my office.

I am especially proud of entering into a long-term lease with the Cleveland Metroparks to make the West Creek Preserve a part of the Metroparks' Emerald Necklace. Engineering and planning has begun and construction of the state-of-the-art learning center and hiking trails will begin next year. This is an asset that will be enjoyed by Parma residents for generations.

Also important to city government are the offices of the Law Director, the Auditor and the Treasurer.

Law Director Tim Dobeck continues to do a magnificent job protecting the City's interests while implementing programs to make Parma a better place to live. One such project, initiated by his Department in cooperation with the Parma Police, is operation SCOUR, which has removed 14 convicted sex offenders from housing located within 1,000 feet of a school within the past few months.

Auditor Dennis Kish continues to run a precise operation that oversees the City's vital financial functions.

And there's newly elected Treasurer Anthony Zielinski, who has started quarterly informational meetings for residents, and incorporated a credit card option for citizens to pay their taxes.

Parma is a patriotic city. We welcomed home wounded Marine Staff Sergeant Dan Priestly this summer. Thousands lined our streets for Marine Corporal Jeff Boskovitch's funeral procession and we mourned with his family as we honored a fallen hero. Then, finally this fall, we celebrated the return of the rest of the 3/25 Marines as they returned home from their tour of duty in Iraq.

Parma is a hard-working city. We rejoiced when our Parma General Motors plant was spared in 2005, and we will continue to partner with GM Management to help with the recently announced down sizing of employees.

Parma is a proud city. We are proud of our heritage, our diversity, our neighborhoods and our schools. We are the 7th largest city in the state yet we look out for each other as if we were a small village.

Parma is a city with a vision of the future. We have a master plan that designates areas for development and re-development. We have built sanitary sewers and widened roads.

But there is still much to be done. As I begin the second half of my term as Mayor I am looking forward to the challenges we face. Parma is operating on an extremely tight budget. Everyone here knows how tough it would be to run your household if your income had not increased proportionally to cost, and the City is no different.

To accomplish our goals: to fix our aging water and sewer lines, to strengthen the infrastructure of our city, to assure the safety and security of our residents; we must explore ways to increase our operating funds. I have created a new position of grantwriter in my administration so that all grant funding opportunities can be identified. But grants alone are not enough.

We will do everything possible to continue to attract new business to Parma, but that will still not be enough. My directors and your elected officials will continue their frugal financial management, but Parma will need more.

That is why I will place the income tax equalization issue on the May ballot. I am asking the voters to increase the tax rate to 2.5 percent and to approve a restoration of the 2 percent credit for the two-thirds of our residents who work outside of the city. Most folks would see a reduction in their city income tax, but the increased revenues from workers who live outside of Parma will provide us with the money we need to maintain our current services and to position Parma for the future.

Over three years ago when I announced I would run for Mayor, I promised strong and decisive leadership if I was elected. I also promised a change in your city government. I promised a better image for Parma.

I have kept my promises to you - the citizens of Parma, and I will continue to work as hard as I can to make our city as great as it can be.

Leading a big city like Parma is not always easy. Many times unpopular decisions have to be made.

It is never easy to say “no” or to be the bearer of bad news. But that is the price of leadership and I proudly accept it and will continue to lead our great city and to do everything I can to make it an all-American city and a great place to live and raise a family.

God bless you all and thank you for coming.